

**January 15, 2009**

**Media Statement**

---

## **Increase in men wanting workplace flexibility**

Equal Opportunity Commissioner Yvonne Henderson said today there is small but significant number of men complaining about their inability to access flexible work arrangements to care for children or other family members.

“Men are starting to bring forward formal complaints of difficulties at work when they try to change their work hours to accommodate their parental responsibilities or access part time work,” Ms Henderson said.

“In some cases the response appears to be a blanket refusal without any consideration given as to whether the request can reasonably be met.”

Ms Henderson said it appeared in some organisations there was an ‘outright resistance’ to assisting men to work part time or more flexibly.

“It appears that some employers are opposed to providing these opportunities to their male workers in case other male workers seek similar arrangements.”

“In some workplaces there is a desire to ‘hold the line’ against male part time work.”

For example, in a recent case a male employee of a government agency was not offered part time work when his family responsibilities increased due to a sick parent and his partner's sick parent.

He was required to look after two children on more occasions due to the increased carer roles - his own and his partner's - but the employer initially disallowed him to reduce his hours.

The employer stated it was currently only offering job share as an option and that was not possible in this man's case.

“Following conciliation at the Commission, the man was offered part time work and the organisation is reviewing its policies about flexible work practices for the future with a view to making part time available to all employees where appropriate.”

Ms Henderson was also quick to add that many female workers also still found it hard to achieve flexible work arrangements to accommodate their family responsibilities.

“The right not to be discriminated against on the basis of family responsibilities applies equally to men and to women.

“Enlightened employers see the benefits in terms of retaining skilled and committed employees by accommodating these requests where this can reasonably be done,” she said.

**FOR ADDITIONAL COMMENT: Commissioner Yvonne Henderson  
(08) 9216 3954 or mobile number 0409 880 544**